

House Party

Ace Anthony

Please note, this work includes content related to self-harm.

I kneel into a dream
that turns Appalachian-hot and bohemian.

I open the front door
to a room that turns wet and writhing
with insipid composure that sweats
as the cherry-colored light competes
with people's immodesty.
I watch how they lick up
the iridescence,
the grotesque, all that psychedelic nonsense,
like an oil spill smeared across
the apathy of their teeth.

Bodies blur, rituals of elegance
stammer at the tacky welcome mat.
I am suddenly greeted by
a tenacious aesthete whose
gaze is settled between the then and now.
She takes my arm,
hushes me with her glow-in-the-dark tongue,
and lets the liquifying haze
baptize me.

Our hands interlock, amalgamate,
and she turns wild.

My name is sought after in many mouths,
placing the slurred syllables on the corner of a
playing card
at the top of the deck.
I am the wager of two flavored joints and an
unmixed drink;
somehow I have conquered it all already.

The liquor is sharp
like shrapnel, whetting my words into a prose
she smokes to the filter.
One drink is an execution of valor,
three is insignificant;
I need to tell her I'm ready to die.

She drags me further into
the gaze of others who stare
insectile with their thousand-lensed eyes.
"They will eat your brain," she whispers
and I believe her.
Morphology looks different here.
We stare until they take flight
with tablecloth wings,
the movement feverish and hysterical.
When was the last time
I could breathe?

I take sanctuary outside
where I hope redemption waits for me.

The moon, a scythe half-hung,
and Dante's stars strike down in the yard;
they are alight and buzzing in small fractures
like disco balls of hydrogen.

The night glows
and sobers me for only a moment;
my hands shake with forgotten urgency.
She waits at the door, questioning,
and behind her an erratic portal
blinks blue and electric.

I blink back.
I need to tell her I'm going to set myself on fire.